

**Submission
No 69**

**INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Kodály NSW

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Submission to the Inquiry into Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales

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1. Introduction

The Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia Incorporated (also known as Kodály Australia) is an organisation of people committed to music for everyone. We are united in the philosophy developed by Hungarian composer, Zoltan Kodály. Kodály stated that music education is the right of every child. He established that a sequential, cumulative and developmental program, based on an aural-vocal approach, is the most inclusive and effective way to develop musical literacy for people of all age groups.

Kodály Australia was founded by Dr Deanna Hoermann in 1973. Now, with approximately 1000 members in Australia, the Institute consists of State branches in the ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, VIC, and WA, with chapters in Mackay and Townsville. We also have some members in New Zealand and South-East Asia.

Kodály Australia is an affiliated national member of the International Kodály Society and a partner of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) Council of Professional Associations.

Our members specialise in a number of areas of music education from birth through to seniors: new parent and early childhood activities, school classrooms, studio teaching, as well as choral, conducting and instrumental activities. State Branches and Chapters support members by providing workshops, newsletters, and conferences, and Kodály Australia provides a biennial National Conference.

The Australian Kodály Certificate is offered by the Institute in the fields of early childhood, primary, secondary and string teaching. This course, consisting of 180 contact hours, provides pre-service, current classroom and studio music teachers with the skills and knowledge to deliver a sequential, cumulative, developmental and aural-based music curriculum. The curriculum for this award has been modelled on outstanding international Kodály programs and adapted to suit the needs of Australian educators. It is comprehensive, rigorous and involves a mixture of both hands-on (practical) and lecture style tuition. Peer education is an important part of the training and the course is delivered by experienced and accredited lecturers who are working teachers and expert in their specific field of Kodály study. The Australian Kodály Certificate can be accepted for credit towards post-graduate study.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to serve with integrity and honesty as a centre of excellence for music education. Our aim is to build, lead and resource communities of educators committed to enhancing the musical skills of children and adults through sequential and developmental, singing-based programs. These programs are inclusive of all, nurturing a love and passion for music and music-making. We provide opportunities for teachers and musicians to raise their levels of achievement and we strive to inform government authorities on the importance of quality music education for all children.

2. Terms of Reference

This submission will focus on responding to the following terms of reference:

- (b) the quality and effectiveness of music education and training, including:
 - (i) *progress towards a long-term goal of quality music education, including actions to address identified barriers*
 - (ii) *the present level and status of formal music education across all levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary levels*

3. Recommendations

In addressing the above Terms of Reference, we make the following recommendations for the Committee to consider:

Recommendation 1. That students in every primary school be given equitable access to Music education via weekly lessons throughout the year from Kindergarten to Year 6, delivered by a trained classroom Music specialist.

Recommendation 2. That undergraduate primary classroom teachers receive extensive training to attain the same level of confidence in Music education as all other KLA.

4. Progress towards a long-term goal of quality music education, including actions to address identified barriers.

The current state of Music Education in NSW Primary Schools is incredibly inequitable. Most private schools employ a Music specialist who has the capacity to deliver a rigorous and comprehensive Music learning experience for those students fortunate enough to have the means to attend such a school. By contrast, the majority of public schools in NSW have no such Music specialist and the responsibility for teaching Music falls to the classroom teacher. In some public schools (usually higher SES), where Music is highly valued by the Principal and/or Parents Association funds are made available to employ a Music specialist. However, even in those schools, the scope of the Music learning is rarely comparable to that offered in many private schools. And for those schools where the classroom teacher has responsibility for delivering the Music curriculum, the reality is that they are completely ill-equipped for the task and their students receive minimal Music education and more often, none at all. Sometimes singing a song in Assembly with a recording might be the only Music experience for those students for their entire primary schooling.

There is extensive research that demonstrates the many and varied benefits of receiving a rich Music education and that this should begin from the earliest years, with the primary school years being a crucial time to develop these skills. Dr Anita Collins has collected and synthesised a vast amount of this research on her website which can be accessed here: [Bigger Better Brains](#). We know that one of the most significant benefits of Music education is that it 'primes the brain for learning'. It has an integrative effect on the brain, causing brain development that benefits the whole person.

This article from the Music Trust <https://musictrust.com.au/music-education/research/some-interesting-music-education-research-outcomes/> highlights some interesting music education research outcomes including:

1. Nearly two out of three Australian primary schools offer no classroom music
2. Australian primary school classroom teachers receive on average only 17 hours of music education in their undergraduate degree – and only 10 hours if qualifying through a postgraduate degree.
3. The top foreign countries in the PISA rankings give their primary school teachers far better music education than does Australia
4. 88% to 23%. Proportion of Australia schools offering good music education: independent, around 88%, government, around 23%.
5. A large percentage of the population favour provision of music education in schools
6. Effects of music education on brain development
7. Summary of the benefits of music education
8. Successful professional musicians mostly began music lessons at a young age
9. Swiss children who spent more time with music education did better on many counts than those who just followed the normal curriculum
10. Sweden's music industry is a world champion – because of its music education system

We believe, as Kodály did, that Music education is the right of every child and the vast majority of children in NSW are missing out. All students should have the opportunity to develop a foundation of music literacy, regardless of SES background.

Recommendation 1. That students in every primary school in NSW be given equitable access to Music education via weekly lessons throughout the year from Kindergarten to Year 6, delivered by a trained classroom Music specialist

5. The present level and status of formal music education across all levels, including primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

We have already addressed the status of formal music education in primary schools in point 4 above. As Music is mandated in Stage 4 in NSW, all secondary students should receive some level of Music education in Years 7 and 8. However, the delivery of this is not consistent, with some schools studying Music only in Year 7 or Year 8 or for half of Year 7 and half of Year 8. This is not suitable for a skills-based subject that requires consistent, sequential teaching.

The take-up of Music as an elective subject has been declining, particularly at HSC Level where there is a perception that it does not scale well.

One of the difficulties faced by secondary teachers is catering for students with a wide range of musical experiences, depending on the quality of music education they received in their primary school. The primary school years are critical for this music development. If the quality of music education occurring in the primary school was addressed, the flow-on effect to the secondary school would be significant. In the longer term, this would also mean that undergraduate classroom teachers would be more likely to have a foundation level of confidence in Music.

It is clear that Music is not highly valued in most undergraduate education courses. This is evidenced by the small time allocation generally given to developing the musical skills of the tertiary education students. This is in contrast to the amount of contact time devoted to music education in generalist classroom university degrees in countries with the highest PISA scores. In 1982, When teachers were trained in Teachers' Colleges or Colleges of Advanced Education (before they were all rolled into the universities), NSW courses provided 200 hours of Music education to all undergraduate students. Now Australian generalist teachers are given, on average, only 17 hours of Music education training and sometimes none at all, compared to 160 hours in South Korea and 350 hours in Finland.

Music is a unique way of knowing. While all arts subjects are valuable, they are not the same and they are not learned in the same way. Music education is the right of all children. In addition to lessons with a Music specialist the classroom teacher should be trained to be able to support the ongoing musical development of their students. While music has a significant intrinsic value of its own, intentional music experiences integrated throughout every day can provide "brain-breaks", raise energy levels or calm the regulatory system, and nurture social cohesion and a spirit of team-work. There is extensive research supporting the role of music education in classroom management, engagement, school attendance and benefits to mental health.

Recommendation 2. That undergraduate primary classroom teachers receive extensive training to attain the same level of confidence in Music education as all other KLAs.

6. Conclusion

Kodály NSW welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales.

We look forward to the positive impact of your findings resonating across every corner of NSW through generations to come.

**Kodály NSW Branch President
25 July 2024**